Amendment to the Claims:

1. (previously presented): A process to intentionally degrade original digital data comprising:

searching the original digital data for detection criteria; and

after locating detection criteria, adjusting at least one neighboring point associated with the detection criteria, wherein the original digital data is degraded in quality by said adjusting, but the original digital data is recoverable from the intentionally degraded digital data.

2. (previously presented): The process of claim 1 in which the detection criteria comprises a pseudo-random sequence.

3. (previously presented): The process of claim 1 in which the adjustment of the at least one neighboring point involves a pseudo-random sequence.

4. (previously presented): The process in claim 1 in which the detection criteria includes a threshold crossing.

5 – 15 (canceled).

16. (previously presented): An apparatus comprising:

a logic processor; and

a storage unit comprising means for analyzing digital content, wherein the digital content has been transformed with a self-synchronizing degradation from an original state of the digital content, and means for recovering the original state of the digital content from the self-synchronized degraded digital content.

17 – 20. (canceled)

21. (previously presented): A method of restoring degraded digital content, wherein the degraded digital content comprises degradation from an original state of the digital content, said method comprising:

analyzing the degraded digital content to identify a plurality of detection criteria, wherein for each of the plurality of detection criteria there exists in the degraded digital content a group of neighboring points; and

for each group of neighboring points, adjusting each member of a group of neighboring points according to a predetermined process, wherein the predetermined process corresponds with a process used to degrade the digital content from the original state, and wherein said adjusting helps to restore the degraded digital content to the original state.

22. (previously presented): The method of claim 21, wherein the group comprises at least one neighboring point.

23. (previously presented): The method of claim 21, wherein the plurality of detection criteria comprises a pseudo-random sequence.

24. (previously presented): The method of claim 21, wherein the plurality of detection criteria includes a threshold crossing.

25. (previously presented): The method of claim 21, wherein the predetermined process is an inverse of the process used to degrade the digital content from the original state.

26. (previously presented): The method of claim 21, wherein the digital content comprises audio content.

27. (previously presented): The method of claim 21, wherein the digital content comprises video content.

28. (previously presented): The method of claim 21, wherein the digital content comprises image content.

29. (previously presented): The method of claim 21, wherein the degraded digital content is intentionally degraded in a manner which does not convey information.

30. (previously presented): A method of restoring intentionally degraded digital content, wherein the intentionally degraded digital content comprises intentional degradation from an original state of the digital content, said method comprising:

analyzing the intentionally degraded digital content to identify a plurality of detection criteria; and

for each of the plurality of detection criteria, adjusting the intentionally degraded digital content according to a predetermined process, wherein the predetermined process corresponds with a process used to intentionally degrade the digital content from the original state, and wherein said adjusting restores the intentionally degraded digital content to the original state.

31. (canceled).

32. (previously presented): The method of claim 30, wherein for each of the plurality of detection criteria there exists in the degraded digital content a group of neighboring points, wherein said adjusting comprises for each group adjusting each member of the group of neighboring points.

33. (previously presented): The method of claim 30, wherein the digital content comprises audio.

34. (previously presented): The method of claim 30, wherein the digital content comprises video.

35. (previously presented): The method of claim 16, wherein said means for recovering the original state of the digital content comprises means for analyzing the degraded digital content to identify a plurality of detection criteria, and means for adjusting for each of the detection criteria the degraded digital content according to a predetermined process.

36. (previously presented): The method of claim 35, wherein the predetermined process corresponds with a process used to degrade the digital content from the original state.

37. (previously presented): The method of claim 36, and wherein said adjusting means helps to restore the degraded digital content to the original state.

38. (previously presented): The method of claim 35, wherein for each of the plurality of detection criteria there exists in the degraded digital content a group of neighboring points, wherein said adjusting means adjusts, for each group, each member of the group of neighboring points.

39. (previously presented): The method of claim 16 wherein the self-synchronizing degradation comprises intentional degradation.

40. (previously presented): An audio player for playing back an audio signal distributed through a network, which comprises:

removing means for removing degradation data from an audio signal embedded with data using a specific key, said degradation data being at a signal level which is audible to the human sense of hearing; and

playback means for playing back an audio signal.

41. (previously presented): The player of claim 40 wherein the degradation data includes embedded data.

42. (previously presented): An audio distribution system including a distribution apparatus for distributing an audio signal through a network and an audio player for playing back said distributed audio signal, wherein said distribution apparatus comprises embedding means for embedding in said audio signal degradation data of which a signal level is audible to the human sense of hearing when the audio signal is played back; and wherein said audio player comprises removing means for removing degradation data from said embedded audio signal using a specific key.

43. (currently amended): An audio distribution method wherein a sending side process<u>es</u> an audio signal for distribution through a network and a receiving side plays back <u>the</u> ~~said~~ audio signal, <u>said method</u> ~~which~~ comprises: embedding degradation data in <u>an</u> ~~said~~ audio signal at the sending side, <u>the</u> ~~said~~ degradation data having a signal level that is audible to the human sense of hearing when the audio signal is played back; and removing degradation data from <u>the</u> ~~said~~ embedded audio signal using a specific key at playback.